

COUNCIL: 30 MARCH 2023

LEADER STATEMENT

MIPIM 2023

Earlier this month, I joined the Invest in Cardiff and Cardiff Capital Region teams that attended and exhibited at this year's MIPIM property event in Cannes, France, which was held on 14-17 March 2023. Cardiff's presence at this event over the years has played a pivotal role in delivering significant private sector into the city, most notably projects such as Central Square, and the forthcoming Nordic Urban investment at the Mount Stuart Graving Docks.

This year's conference provided a valuable opportunity post-Covid for the Council to join with partner organisations, including the Cardiff Capital Region and Western Gateway, in promoting Cardiff and major regeneration projects across the Cardiff Capital Region, and engaging with potential investors by showcasing the £10billion worth of investment opportunities within the city-region. I was also pleased to speak at multiple events at the Conference, as well as meeting personally with a number of potential investors, as part of a strong partnership effort that is all about attracting more investment and jobs to Cardiff and the wider region. As has been the case over recent years, Cardiff's attendance at MIPIM was funded primarily by private sector sponsorship, with additional contributions being made by the Cardiff Capital Region and Welsh Government.

Western Gateway

I chaired a meeting of Western Gateway's Severn Estuary Steering Committee on 10th March 2023, which forms part of Western Gateway's 'Decarbonisation of Energy' workstream that seeks to position the area as a global leader in green renewable energy systems. Western Gateway announced previously that it would be establishing an Independent Commission to explore sustainable energy options in the Severn Estuary and I can confirm that discussions are currently ongoing regarding the appointment of the Chair of the Independent Commission.

Western Gateway also launched a new Rail Vision 2050 for the area on 23rd March 2023 that aims to unlock potential in South Wales and Western England through investment in the rail network. This ambitious, but deliverable vision is the product of collaborative work between the Western Gateway Partnership, Transport for Wales and the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body, as well as local leaders, industry stakeholders and academics. It builds on already proposed and approved schemes by seeking to accelerate their delivery and identify future infrastructure additions that are needed to maximise the benefits of the area's transport system.

The new Rail Vision 2050 also articulates the national case for investment in rail in the Western Gateway area, particularly at a time when significant rail investment is being made in other parts of the UK, and looks to reverse decades of underinvestment in rail services that lag behind comparator UK regions.

Interceltic Business Forum

I attended and spoke at a meeting of the Interceltic Business Forum, which was held in Cardiff on 3rd February 2023. The meeting provided an opportunity for Cardiff to celebrate its historic Celtic connections with France, Ireland and Scotland and, more importantly, to form new business connections and strengthen existing relationships. This is particularly important for Cardiff and Wales as both Ireland and France are among the top five destinations for the export of Welsh goods, with Welsh exports to France alone valued at just over £1.8 billion in 2020.

The Interceltic Business Forum came into being last year at the annual Festival Interceltique in Lorient, Brittany, which is attended by around 700,000 people from all over the world. The Interceltic Business Forum has since been successful in facilitating business opportunities in a unique, but effective way, and the meeting in Cardiff discussed how the Forum can maximise its future potential. Post-Brexit, it is vital that Cardiff continues to be outward looking and strengthen its relationships with European partners and businesses.

German-UK Mayors Virtual Roundtable

I was pleased to attend a virtual roundtable meeting of German and UK Mayors, which was held on 22nd February 2023, as a member and representative of both Core Cities UK and the Welsh Local Government Association, as well as in my capacity as the local government leader of a city that has been twinned with Stuttgart in Germany since 1955. The meeting was also attended by other UK Core City Mayors/Deputy Mayors and Leaders/Deputy Leaders of other UK Core Cities and local authorities in the UK with long-established twinning and/or business links to German cities.

Local authorities in Wales, including Cardiff, are keen to explore opportunities to exchange good practice and increase investments between Wales's four City Deal and Growth Deal economic regions and the German Länder. Germany is also one of Wales's largest export destinations and is a big contributor to the tourism industry in Wales. Welsh local government supports the ambitions of the Welsh Government's International Strategy and welcomes the work of the Welsh Government's international offices in Berlin and Dusseldorf in Germany to promote business and academic opportunities across our nations and cities.

Visit by Nantes Delegation

A delegation from our twin city of Nantes in France is currently visiting Cardiff and I was pleased to welcome them to the city at a reception event held at City Hall on 20th March 2023. Next year, our two cities look forward to celebrating the 60th anniversary of our special relationship.

Over the years, we have built a solid foundation of friendship between the residents of our cities, which has been forged principally through sharing many school, youth and sport exchanges. It is particularly important that our relationship continues to strengthen and grow post-Brexit and, in January 2020, Cardiff and Nantes reaffirmed their relationship as twin cities by formally signing a Declaration of Friendship. In addition, as part of the Welsh Government's 'Wales in France' initiative, Cardiff and Nantes will be working closely to identify new areas of future collaboration.

#CitiesWithUkraine

To commemorate the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine on 24th February 2023, Eurocities marked the date by compiling and sending video messages of support and solidarity from cities all around Europe, including Cardiff, to the Ukrainian people. I was pleased to contribute to this symbolic gesture by providing a message which made clear to the Ukrainian people that Cardiff stands with them in the face of Russia's invasion of their nation. As a City of Sanctuary, Cardiff is proud to have supported Ukrainian families fleeing the conflict by offering safe refuge to over 1,000 Ukrainian citizens. The bond between our two countries runs deep and, just as the people of Ukraine supported the striking miners of Wales during their hour of need in the 1980s, Cardiff continues to play its part in helping Ukrainians affected by the conflict.

Welsh Refugee Council Visit

I was pleased to join with my Cabinet colleague, Councillor Sangani, and Councillor Jamie Green in welcoming a Welsh Refugee Council delegation, including some of their volunteers and clients, to City Hall prior to the Council meeting on 9th March 2023. The meeting provided an opportunity to explain more about politics and decision making in Cardiff; how the Council works and what the Council does, particularly in terms of the temporary accommodation and support services that we have provided to refugee Afghan and Ukrainian nationals who have resettled in Cardiff within the last two years.

St David's Day Celebrations

A St. David's Day – Dydd Gŵyl Dewi event was held at City Hall on 1st March 2023. The event featured a fantastic performance by the Ysgol Pencae choir and a variety of activities that enabled everyone to speak and celebrate the Welsh language. It also provided an opportunity to recognise the Council's many Welsh learners, with certificates being awarded to acknowledge their achievements and their commitment to learning to speak Welsh. The Council has ensured that this opportunity is open to all employees through the provision of free Welsh language courses provided by the Cardiff Academy. The number of council employees with Welsh language skills has continued to increase over recent years and this enables us to offer Welsh language services of a high standard to our citizens and to meet our statutory responsibilities under the Welsh Language Standards. It also supports our aim for Cardiff to become a truly bilingual capital city and contributes towards meeting the Welsh Government's target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

International Mother Language Day

International Mother Language Day originated in Bangladesh in 1952 and was officially launched in 1999 by UNESCO (United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation). It is held annually on 21st February 2023 and I was pleased to join the Lord Mayor in attending and speaking at a subsequent celebration event that was held on 28th February at the city's International Mother Language Monument, which has been located within Grangemoor Park in Grangetown since 2019. International Mother Language Day provides an opportunity to celebrate the diversity that exists within Cardiff's communities, where over 100 different languages and dialects are spoken.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
24 March 2023